

ANNUAL REPORT

Of the

Officers and Committees

Of the town of

ASHFIELD MASSACHUSETTS

For the year ending 2015



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This year's Town Report is dedicated to
**To the citizens of the Town of Ashfield
who made the 250th celebrations possible**



Photo: Jody Hall

The 250th Celebration of the Incorporation of Ashfield on June 21, 1765

Over the course of 2015 townspeople and guests gathered on 28 occasions to celebrate their history, to learn more about it, and to make history afresh. Activities included delicious and plentiful meals, beard-

growing, a reenactment of ice-harvesting at the lake, an Ashfield Trails hike, the release of *History of the Town of Ashfield, Volume III*, fireworks, a magnificent parade, interfaith worship, solstice celebration, study groups, music-making, dance, youth and family activities, mint tea social, and rotating displays at the Ashfield Historical Society of locally-made textiles of the past and present.

The success of the celebrations is a tribute to the strength of the town's infrastructure. The Select Board generously allocated the necessary funds. The Ashfield Historical Commission took the initiative in planning and involving the public, out of which grew the 250th Steering Committee. *The Ashfield News* spread the word every month. The Ashfield Historical Society provided a rich repository of archival materials used for newspaper articles and publicity, and the AHS 2015 calendar featured photographs of past celebrations. The Ashfield History Project released *Volume III* of Ashfield's history, and many residents participated directly in its creation. For the parade day of June 20 Doug Cranson drew from Fall Festival protocol to manage parking, as did the Police Department for traffic, Steve Gougeon for signage and Mike Skalski for trash removal, along with their crews of volunteers.

On the occasion of town's 300th anniversary in 2065 the 2015 time capsule will be opened. We hope that today's children, youth, and young adults will look back to what townspeople did in this memorable year and find inspiration.

Ashfield gratefully thanks:

Don Robinson and Phyllis Kirkpatrick and the Ashfield History Project for *History of the Town of Ashfield, Volume III*; The 250th Steering Committee, Laura Bessette, Ricki Carroll, Steve Gougeon, Jody Hall and Diane Sibley; Diane Sibley for the 250th logo; David Kulp for publicity in *The Ashfield News*; Addison Hall and Laura Bessette for the beard contest; Mike Skalski and Stuart Harris for the ice-cutting reenactment; Doug and Penny Mollison and the Ashfield Fire Department for the fireworks; Mike Skalski and Steve Gougeon for the parade; Cynthia Mangsen and the Ashfield Community Band for celebratory music; Dwight Scott and team for the steeple replica float; the Cranson and Gougeon families and Steve Lilly for parking and signage on June 19; Gloria Pacosa and crew for the dinner/dance party. Many others served as event coordinators and volunteers.

250th Events and Event Organizers

Ashfield Historical Society 2015 250th Calendar - Alan Rice Nancy Garvin and Grace Lesure
 2015 New Year's Day Potluck - Ricki Carroll
 Beard Contest Registration - Laura Bessette, Addison Hall, Nancy Hoff and Phil Nolan
 Ashfield History Includes Black History - Donna Elwell, Roberta Wilmore and Lou Ratte
 Ice Cutting - Stuart Harris and Mike Skalski
 Ice Cutting, Past and Present - Jody Hall
 Old Growth Forest Hike - Erik Hoffner and Bob Leverett
 Beard Contest Open House - Laura Bessette and Addison Hall
 Book Group: History of Ashfield's Settlement - Jody Hall & Susan Wade
 Ashfield Trails 250th Hike - Phil Pless
 Textiles, Now and Then -Ashfield Historical Society and
 Ashfield Needles and Threads Group
 Release Party for *Volume III* - Phyllis Kirkpatrick and Mollie Babize
 Beard Judging - Laura Bessette and Addison Hall
 Potluck on the Common -Willis and Pat Thayer
 Fireworks over the Lake -Doug & Penny Mollison, Ashfield Fire Dept.
 Parade on June 20 - Mike Skalski and Steve Gougeon
 Expanded Farmers' Market on June 20 - Donna Elwell and Sue Atherton
 Parking for June 20 - Doug Cranson
 Two Ashfield Community Band Concerts - Cynthia Mangsen
 Youth and Family Activities on June 20 - Molly Robinson & Susan Todd
 Trash Removal on June 20 - Mike Skalski
 Contradance - Ricki Carroll
 Party under the Stars - Gloria Pacosa, Steve Gougeon, and Nina Coler
 Solstice Celebration - Arianna Collins, Heather and Lyle Gray
 Interfaith Service - Bruce Bennett, Eliot Moss, Kate Stevens & Susan Todd
 Play Ball! A Baseball Jamboree - Tom Moore, Will Thayer and the Ashfield PTO - Jenn Pease, Mandi Summers and Jess Thompson
 Community Sing - Amy Crawford-Roberts
 Peppermint Tea Social - Helen Hall, Hetty Startup and Beverly Duncan
 Legacy of Rural Music - Jackie Cooper
 DANCE! for Ashfield -Christina Gabriel
 Time Capsule - Hetty Startup and Susan Todd

Government Contact Information

GOVERNOR

Charlie Baker

Western Massachusetts Office of the Governor
State Office Building
436 Dwight Street, Suite 300
Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: 413.784.1200
www.mass.gov

STATE SENATOR

Benjamin Downing, Pittsfield

District Office
7 North Street, Suite 307, Pittsfield, MA 01201
617-722-1625
Benjamin.Downing@massenate.gov

REPRESENTATIVE IN GENERAL COURT

Stephen Kulik

District Office
PO Box 49
Haydenville, MA 01039
Tel: (413) 977.3580, Fax: (617) 722.2847
<https://twitter.com/repstevekulik>
Stephen.kulik@mahouse.gov

U.S. CONGRESS

Richard Neal

Springfield Office
300 State Street, Suite 200
Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 785-0325
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www.house.gov/neal

U.S. SENATE

Senator Elizabeth Warren
Springfield Office
1550 Main Street, Suite 406
Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: (413) 788-2690
www.warren.senate.gov

U.S SENATE

Senator Edward J. Markey
Springfield Office
1550 Main Street, 4th Floor
Springfield, MA 01101
413-785-4610
www.markey.senate.gov

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
12 Olive Street Suite 2 Greenfield, MA 01301
413-774-3167, ext. 103
lindad@frcog.org

***Town Officers
2015/2016***

Appointed One-Year Terms

Town Office Staff

Assessors' Clerk	Jenn Morse
Assistant Municipal Clerk	Lynn Taylor
Executive Administrator	Mary Fitz-Gibbon - <i>retired June 30, 2015</i>
Town Administrator	Derek Brindisi - <i>resigned October 30, 2015</i>
Interim Town Administrator	Kayce Warren - <i>appointed January 19, 2016</i>

Appointed Two Year Term Expires - 2016

Town Clerk	Ann Dunne
Town Collector	Laura Blakesley
Treasurer	Laura Blakesley

Elected Officers- One Year Term

Moderator	Stuart Eisenberg
Tree Warden	Thomas Poissant

Three-year terms and term expiration

Select Board

Tom Carter, Chair	2016
Todd Olanyk	2017
Ronald Coler, Vice Chair	2018

Board of Assessors

Sandy Lilly, Chair	2016
Donna Sarro	2017
Amy Shapiro	2018

Finance Committee

Ted Murray, Chair	2016
Janet Rogers - <i>resigned December 21, 2015</i>	2016

Melinda Gougeon - <i>appointed until May 7, 2016</i>	
Tom Schreiber	2017
Ricki Carroll - <i>resigned October 9, 2015</i>	2017
Carol Lebold - <i>appointed until May 7, 2016</i>	
David Newell	2018

Mohawk Trail Regional School Committee

Helen “Poppy” Doyle	2016
Emily Robertson	2018

Board of Health

Karen Lavallee	2016
Duncan Colter, Chair	2017
Carrie O’ Gorman	2018

Constables

John LaBelle	2016
Elizabeth Lesure	2016
Warren Kirkpatrick	2018

Park Commission

Judy Haupt, Chair	2016
Kyle Taylor	2017
Sally Rice	2018

Sewer Commission

Daniel Lovett	2016
Tom Miner, Jr.	2017
Nancy Hoff, Chair.	2018

Five-year terms and term expiration

Planning Board

Ken Miller	2016
Lauren Preston-Wells	2017
Jim Cutler	2018
Michael Fitzgerald, Chair	2019
Alan Rice, Clerk	2020
Megan Bowen, Scribe	2016

Library Trustees

Virginia Wiswell	2016
Marcine Eisenberg, Chair	2017
Caroline Murray	2018
Renee Rastorfer	2019
Sandra Carter	2020

Appointed Boards & Committees
Terms run July 1 - June 30

One-Year Terms

Town History Editorial Board

- Phyllis Kirkpatrick, Co-Chair
- Don Robinson, Co-Chair
- Tom Carter
- Dave Fessenden
- Harry Keramidas
- Stuart Harris
- Martha Tirk
- Patricia Thayer

Green Committee

- Mary Quigley
- Jen Williams
- Brian Clark, Chair
- Jim Cutler - Energy Manager - appointed October 7, 2014

Information Technology Committee

- David Kulp, Chair
- Juliet Jacobson
- Brian Clark
- Andrew Smith
- George Stephan

Town Hall Building Committee

- Stuart Harris, Chair.
- Doug Cranson
- Nancy Garvin
- Mary Quigley
- Donna Scott

Kyle Taylor – appointed January 22, 2015– as committee member and Town Hall Steward

Three-Year Terms

Agricultural Commission

Robyn Crowningshield	2016
Johanna Anderson-Pratt	2017
Steve Gougeon	2018
Vacancy	2019

Zoning Board of Appeals

Kit Nysten	2016
Anne Yuryan	2017
Mollie Babize, Chair	2018
Michael Melcher, Alternate	

Appointed December 29, 2014, appointed annually

Conservation Commission

Janet Clark	2016
Lester Garvin, Chair	2016
Brian Clark	2016
Phil Lussier	2017
Anne Capra	2018
Anne Capra, Scribe, appointed annually	2016

Council on Aging

Wayne Wickland, Chair	2016
Steven Zamojski	2017
Doug Field	2018

Historical Commission

Steve Gougeon, Chair	2016
Bill Scaife	2016
Jody Hall	2016
Gerard McGovern	2016
Vacancy	2016

Personnel Board

Priscilla Phelps, Chair	2016
Melinda Gougeon, Finance Committee member	2016
Thomas Carter, Select Board member	2016

Jenn Markens 2016
Wayne Farrell 2017

Cultural Council

Jane Willis 2016
Carole Groman 2016
Wesley Fleming 2017
Andrew Kinsey 2017
Helena Leue 2017
Roberta Evans 2018
David Fessenden 2018

One-Year Terms

Registrars of Voters

Muriel Cranson
Susan Gambino
Nancy Intres
Ann Dunne, Alternate

Fire Chief/Forest Fire Warden

Delmar Haskins, Chief

Police Chief

Diane Wilder - appointed July 1, 2014

Police Officers

Charlie Wilder
Beth Bezio Kaczinski
Conan Pelc
Trisha Carlo
Jordan Zukowski
Jarek Knopko

Emergency Manager

Doug Field

Assistant Emergency Manager

Paul Monohon - appointed February 2016

Highway Superintendent

Thomas Poissant

Highway Department

Alan Taylor
Todd Senecal
Jack Clark
Luke Pantermehl

Transfer Station Attendants

Phil Nolan
John LaBelle

Town Hall Custodian

Donna Scott

Animal Control Officer

Warren Kirkpatrick

Inspector of Animals

Kim Reardon

Fence Viewer

Alden Gray

Field Drivers

Roland Townsley
David King

**FRCOG Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Advisory
Committee Community**

Arthur Pantermehl

Frederick W. Wells Trustee

Molly Robinson

Carl Nilman Scholarship Committee

Sheila Graves

Other Resources

Health Agent

Claudia Lucas
Carl Nelke

Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program - FCCIP Building Inspector Program

Chris Brothers, Department Clerk

Jim Cerone, Local Inspector

Andy French, Plumbing & Gas Inspector

James Hawkins, Building Commissioner

Paul Lemelin, Zoning & Software Support Assistant

Tom McDonald, Electrical Inspector

Superintendent of Schools

Michael Buoniconti

Veteran Service Office

Brian Brooks - 413-772-1571

Local Veteran Service Agent

Curt Pichette

Wayne Farrell, Alternate

Burial Agent

Ann Dunne

Ambulance Service

Mike Rock, Highland Ambulance Director

Ashfield Burial Ground Association

Tom Graves, President

595 Smith Rd. Ashfield, MA 01330

Office hours: Wednesdays 9 a.m. -10 a.m. & 9 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Report of the Select Board

During the past year, the Select Board's most repetitive, yet most enjoyable, task was approving what seemed to be an endless number of requests for events concerning Ashfield's 250th celebration. The New Year's Day potluck, forest walks, dances, concerts, parades and the beard-growing contest are among the ways our community showed appreciation for our location and each other. Yet again, we amaze each other with the volunteer commitment exhibited by so many. Although at this writing, we are not referred to as the "Smith Brothers" our beards have been memorialized in photos for the next celebration in 2065.

In May, the Board presented a budget in excess of \$4.6 million. Along with the finance committee, our budget process is transparent, thoughtful, and empathetic to the needs of our taxpayers, both monetarily and from a level of service perspective. The needs of schools, emergency services, roads, parks and (certainly not least) our office operations continue to be a balancing act centered around the fiscal resources available within the constraints of Proposition 2 1/2. The last time taxpayers were asked to override our levy limit was a decade ago in 2006. At that time the ballot question solely concerning school funding was defeated.

The priority projects before the board are numerous, complicated and expensive.

1.) Broadband in our time. After Town Meeting approval for borrowing over \$2 million to install a fiber optic network, this board, along with the Technology and Finance Committees have worked tirelessly to find an effective and efficient model to employ. After numerous open and collaborative meetings and working with the state, we believe Ashfield will be presented a well-thought out plan in first half of 2016.

2.) Ashfield Lake Dam and Bronson Avenue retaining wall are ready to move forward as soon as the funding is found or borrowed. Ron Coler has worked tirelessly on grant applications to begin construction on both projects. As the old motto goes "If you don't succeed try, try again."

3.) Transfer Station improvements could be an expensive proposition as we work with Mass DEP to meet environmental, safety, security, and recycling guidelines.

4.) Local Education Reform maybe the hardest nut to crack. Our current budget is forecast to be in excess of 55% to education. As a Board and more broadly as the town, our support of education is

unwavering. But our support of an inefficient vehicle to provide that education maybe faltering. Without reform of the Regional operating agreement among member towns our budgets, tax rates, and most importantly, tax bills will become excessive. Changes outlined by the Long Range Planning Group need to be implemented in order for the, no doubt, hard decisions to be made to support education over real estate.

5.) NED Pipeline. Over the last two years, the board has and will continue to promote resolutions resoundingly passed in opposition to the proposed project. Again, Ashfield's greatest strength is the vast grass roots volunteer efforts of our citizens. As a town, Ashfield has representation on county and broader organizations to identify effective legal ways to demonstrate our concerns relating to this project on our community, both inside and outside our borders. Currently, Todd Olanyk is our representative to Municipal Coalition Against the Pipeline, a broad based multi-community organization against the pipeline. Additionally, the Select Board along with other boards and certainly hundreds of Ashfield individuals, have applied for intervener status with FERC. As of this writing, the Town has not appropriated any direct funds from taxes to support any organization but continued individual support to organizations of your choice is encouraged as the process unfolds.

6.) Efficient and Productive offices. The Board along with other interested parties are in what seem to be continuous discussions about the future of where town functions are often fulfilled. With an eye to an always-expanding list of mandates, regulations and laws imposed on communities of all sizes, Ashfield must come to grips with our long-term office needs. Opportunities will be explored and maybe even presented when appropriate. Stay Tuned!

In March, the Board appointed a five-member search committee to identify candidates for Town Administrator. After careful consideration by the committee, four fine candidates were referred to us. After careful review, interviews, and negotiation, we hired Derek Brindisi in June. Reinstatement of a Town Administrator was, and is, a welcome addition in our small town (with what seems to be a large budget). Just as luck would have it, no sooner did he learn where all the light switches were in the Town Hall; Derek was presented with an opportunity, which few would pass up. Leaving in October, the board, in place of reinstating the Search Committee, directly began networking for Interim Candidates. In mid January of 2016, the Select Board contracted with Kayce Warren of Goshen as Interim Town Administrator. Kayce comes to Ashfield with extensive municipal experience from the start.

During this busy and challenging budget season, we are delighted to have her on board.

The Select Board, on behalf of the town, must mention with great affection and appreciation Mary Fitz-Gibbon's retirement as Executive Administrator in 2015. Mary has served Ashfield in a number of appointed and elected positions over her time in Ashfield. Always thoughtful, Mary is an excellent example of an individual's commitment to community service. Thank You Mary!

Respectfully Submitted,
Thomas S. Carter, Chairman

Agricultural Commission

The Agricultural Commission meets semi-monthly on the second Tuesday of the month, and any Ashfield resident who is interested in agriculture in Ashfield is welcome to attend the meetings.

We lost two members recently; one after serving 10 years and one who suddenly discovered he actually lived in Buckland. The Ag Commission has a vacancy for one member, and you don't have to be a farmer, just an interest in farming in town, today and for the future.

We still have a little funding left from a state Ag promotion grant which we used to re-print our Ashfield Farms brochure. This brochure, available at Town Hall, Fall Festival, the Farmer's Market and at local farms in town, is a guide to more than 31 farms in Ashfield.

One long-term goal is to build a re-usable display to be used on the Town Common during Fall Festival.

The Ag Commission will continue to make an effort to link up landowners who have un-used pasture land with farmers that are in need of additional grazing land for animals, making a win-win situation for all.

At the present time, the Ag Commission has no budget and receives no funding from the town. Expenses that we have incurred have been borne by the members themselves, or by minimal grant funds. We have established an Ashfield Agricultural Fund, where monies can be donated for the use of the Ag Commission to support local agriculture, or to conserve valuable agricultural lands. Ashfield has a Right to Farm Bylaw, and also a farming conflict resolution process. Copies of either are available at Town Hall or from the Ag Commission.

Respectfully submitted.
Tom McCrumm, Chair
Steve Gougeon
Johanna Pratt
Robyn Crowningshield

Animal Control Report

The Massachusetts Animal Control position has become more and more complex. I perform the animal control duties for Ashfield as in previous years; however, I can also be summoned to any of the 351 cities or towns in the Commonwealth to help out their animal control officers. With the passage of several new laws, Massachusetts Department of Agriculture and Resource, or DAR, now has control over all animal control officers in the Commonwealth. As before, by law, it is the responsibility of the cities and towns to appoint at least one trained and certified animal control officer. The cities and towns are also responsible for funding the position and all their necessary legal training at the Police Academy in West Boylston, MA. As we enter 2016, Ashfield is in 100% compliance with the new laws and statues.

As a reminder, all dogs six months and older must be licensed by April 1 of each year. In order to obtain a dog license, an up-to-date rabies certificate must be presented to the Town Clerk. This can be done in person, by mail, through the drop box in front of the Town Hall, or on a computer. Payment can be made in the form of cash, check, or credit card. Cats six months and older are also required by state law to have an up-to-date rabies shot. In addition, Ashfield has a year round restraining order. Dog owners are fully responsible for all damages done by an unrestrained dog.

I want to thank all the people and organizations that have supported and assisted me in performing my duties as the Ashfield Animal Control Officer. Anyone having questions or concerns can reach me at 628-3811. Lost and found notices are posted at Neighbors Store, the post office and Ashfield Hardware.

Dogs Confined	5
Dogs Placed	5
Cats Confined	1
Cats Placed	1
Other Animals Confined	1
Animal Bites	2
Phone Calls	1,811
Mileage	879
Labor Hours	1,114
Fines Collected	-0-
Expenses	\$ 609.93

Respectively submitted,

Warren Kirkpatrick, Animal Control Officer

Board of Assessors

The total value of property in Ashfield, as of December 2014, was \$224,035,671, with 91.04% of the property classed as residential, 3.66% commercial, 0.43% industrial, and 4.87 % personal property. All classes are taxed at the same rate. The town's budget is \$4,479,832.29. When revenues from other sources, such as state aid, are subtracted, the total to be raised by taxation is \$3,577,849.66. The tax rate for FY 2015 is \$15.97 per \$1,000 of value.

The BOA is charged only with determining values of property based on fair market value. The actual amount to be raised by taxation each year is voted at Annual and Special Town Meetings. Once the town votes a budget, the BOA calculates a tax rate that will raise that sum, and also what share of that sum each citizen will pay based on the value of property they own. If town wide value goes up from one year to the next, the tax rate will go down based on a similar budget. If the budget goes up and value is stagnant or declining, the tax rate rises accordingly.

Values in Ashfield and throughout the Commonwealth are determined according to practices certified by DOR. The most important factors are size and quality/condition. Other documented influences may play a role, such as a plus for broad views or a minus for seasonal road access. Additional individual adjustments to value and/or tax bills may include factors such as placing eligible land in Chapter 61 encumbrance or various reductions and credits for documented income and disability. Annual fully completed applications are required to be eligible for these individual adjustments, and failure to submit the required information by the prescribed date will result in removal of the adjustment.

The town's values must fall within a tight range of actual comparable sales. Since there are few annual sales in Ashfield (usually around a dozen), the BOA consultant (Mayflower Valuation), working with DOR and the BOA, incorporates some consideration of additional evidence in surrounding towns. Every third year, DOR gives extra scrutiny to this process - the triennial revaluation for Ashfield was completed in 2014.

In order to avoid abrupt short-term changes (except due to new construction or disasters), the BOA works on a three-year average of comparable values. Market trends up or down are thus evened out. For most residents, the actual value of their property changes relatively little year to year when markets are stable. Changes in your tax bill result primarily from changes to the annual town budget that must be raised from taxation.

The BOA must inspect each property at least every nine years or within a shorter window when a building permit for significant structural change that could change value has been granted. When the inspector arrives at your property he/she will present you with a signed letter from the BOA requesting the inspection. If you're not at home he/she will leave the letter for you. The inspection includes measuring the outside of all buildings. If possible, the inspector will set up an appointment with you to inspect the inside of all buildings. The inspector's car will have an "Ashfield Board of Assessors" sign.

The CAI Query Manager Online system is an online system where you can access property cards. The web address is <https://www.caigisonline.com/AshfieldMA/>. You can also access this website through the town's webpage under the Board of Assessors site.

It is your responsibility to ensure that your property card is correct. The assessed value on your property card is what you are taxed on. If you have questions about your assessed value or if you want a copy of your property card to review please contact Jenn Morse, Assessors Clerk in Town Hall by phone (413-628-4441 x 6) or by email assessors@ashfield.org.

Summary of Monies Raised by Taxation and Receipts

	FY13	FY14	FY15
Total amount to be raised	\$4,203,684.80	\$4,479,832.29	\$4,591,778.34
Annual tax levy	\$3,325,676.00	\$3,485,277.86	\$3,577,849.66
Total property value	\$220,389,397.00	\$215,673,135.00	\$224,035,671.00
Tax rate per \$1,000	\$15.09	\$16.16	\$15.97

Respectfully submitted,
 Sandra Lilly, Chair (term expires 2016)
 Donna Sarro (term expires 2017)
 Amy Shapiro (term expires 2018)

Board of Health

2015 was a moderate year for construction with seven perc tests, seven septic system construction permits, and 13 Title Five inspections. A total of \$4,160.00 was collected in fees for the year.

Due to changes in the state supplied vaccines there was not a flu clinic in Ashfield for 2015. We are hoping to be able to have a flu clinic in 2016.

Thank you to fellow Board members Carrie O’Gorman, Karen Lavalley and Health Agents Carl Nelke and Claudia Lucas.

Respectfully Submitted,
Duncan Colter, Chair

Ashfield Burial Ground Association

Supplement to Town Clerk's Report

Burials in **Ashfield Cemeteries**

January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015

Name	Date of Death	Date of Burial	Cemetery
Shirley (Whitehouse) Bacon	09/21/2014	05/13/2015	Plain
Norbert J.M. Tetreault	04/01/2015	05/16/2015	Plain
Joseph Lawrence Sr.	01/18/2015	05/16/2015	Plain
Lorraine (Rocke) Dyer	11/08/2014	05/20/2015	Plain
Audrey (Lanoue) Lewis	2014	05/23/2015	Plain
Marguerite (Samson) Romer	03/09/2015	05/31/2015	Plain
Norma (Day) Harris	09/08/2014	06/27/2015	Plain
Daniel Phelps	05/09/2015	06/28/2015	South Ashfield
Patricia (Knutsen) Arvidson	05/04/2011	08/03/2015	Plain
Nordahl F. Arvidson	02/18/2015	08/03/2015	Plain
Donald Ouimette	06/18/2015	08/15/2015	Spruce Corner
Eleanor (Blanchard) Farrell	04/12/2014	08/22/2015	Plain
Eunice (Manning) Chadwick	09/01/2015	09/04/2015	Plain
Marjorie (Pike) Phillips Davis	8/03/2015	09/19/2015	Plain
Alice (Day) Baggett	2015	09/26/2015	Plain
Ivis (Howes) Russell	10/12/2015	10/16/2015	Plain

Respectfully submitted,
 Tom Graves
 Burial Agent

Conservation Commission

Conservation Commissions in Massachusetts have regulatory responsibility stemming from legislative passage of three acts: Wetlands Protection Act, Riverfront Act, and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Act. We review applications for activities within resource areas, conduct site visits, advertise, and hold hearings, make determinations and issue permits which allow these activities with certain conditions attached. We also have the responsibility to review Forest Cutting Plans prepared under the Forest Cutting Practices Act. Our budget is driven by fixed costs relating to scribe services for our twice-a-month meetings and membership in the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners, which keeps us current with changes or proposed changes in our regulatory responsibilities. Our variable costs are determined by the number of permits we process which entail legal ad fees for hearings and costs for required certified mailing of determinations; these fees are paid by the applicant and are returned to the town's General Fund. When we issue an Order of Conditions for activity in a resource area the applicant is required by law to register these conditions at the Registry of Deeds. After the work is completed the applicant can request the Commission to inspect the work and issue a Certificate of Compliance, which removes the lien from the deed.

The Town of Ashfield owns conservation land adjacent to the trail to the lookout across Hawley Road from the Trustees of Reservations Bear Swamp trailhead. Approximately 15 acres were given to the town by Esther D. & Philip H. Steinmetz in 1977. The sign at the entrance to the property reads, "Brewer Tatro Memorial Woods." Our goal for next year is build awareness of the open space and how best to encourage appropriate recreational uses.

The Commission continues to work with the Board of Health on the resolution of problems caused by beaver activity. The Board of Health Agent can issue a permit to remove beavers if the flooding caused by the dams impacts wells, septic systems, and residences.

In addition to the regulatory responsibility cited above, we assist applicants with Chapter 91 Licensing. Ashfield Lake is over 10 acres in size and defined as a "Great Pond" which requires that all new docks and anchored floats be licensed. We review and sign off on applications for land conservation efforts of organizations such as The Franklin Land Trust and The Trustees of Reservations. We support the preservation of habitats for rare, threatened, and endangered species. We have concerns

about the impact of invasive species and how we as a commission can pursue programs to halt their advance.

Conservation Commission:

Brian Clark

Janet Clark

Lester Garvin, Chair

Philip Lussier

Anne Capra

Council on Aging

This has been a profitable year with the addition of Steve Zamojski to existing members Doug Field and Franklin Wickland, we now have a functioning committee.

The van is not currently in use due to some regulatory issues.

Luncheons are going well. Thanks to the center staff for their help and guidance. Also we thank Marie Fuller for organizing the luncheons and many other ideas.

Many thanks to Charlotte Clement for all the phone calls to our seniors.

Sincerely,
Franklin Wickland, Chair

Emergency Manager

It is that time of year to give the townspeople my annual report. 2015 was a very quiet year in our region. We had no bad weather so emergency personal didn't need to assist Ashfield residents; which is good.

Kyle Taylor resigned from the Assistant Emergency Manager and I thank him for assisting me when he was here. We are looking for an assistant emergency manager at this time to be able to replace me when the time comes.

The emergency team is always ready for any storms. Although our region didn't get any mayor storms, we have to be prepared for one. Our all-call system (Blackboard Connect) has worked out well since we got it. I get the weather from the National Weather Bureau and then I will send it so you will be able to get ready for a storm.

Blackboard Connect is also for Ashfield Residents who have something of interest to the town that they would like announced. For example the New Years Day potluck.

Just a reminder, if there is a bad storm coming and the emergency team has to be activated, we will be at the Fire Station to help you. Just call the Fire Station 628-4441 ext. #2.

I want to thank the Select Board and the town office staff for their support throughout the year.

Douglas Field
Ashfield Emergency Manager

Finance Committee

A number of special projects during the year are of note. David Newell of our committee has continued to work via the Vocational Education Advisory Committee (consisting of representatives from Ashfield, Hawley, Charlemont, and Plainfield) to streamline van routing and monitor fuel usage to ensure that we minimize vocational transportation costs for Ashfield and our partner towns. The committee is also now working more closely with the Mohawk Trail Regional School District to fashion uniform policies about school choice for the vocational schools.

To service handicap lifts in town, we joined area towns in a group contract for maintenance and inspection services via FRCOG's bidding process. For the next three years, Eagle Elevator Company of Boston will be servicing and inspecting our lifts.

We also have joined with the Select Board and Technology Committee in discussions and analysis to secure broadband service for Ashfield. Based on projections by Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), \$3.7 million would be the cost of a fiber-to-the-home fiber optic network to serve the entire town. MBI would provide approximately \$1.4 million and Ashfield would be expected to provide the remaining funds. At a Special Town Meeting on September 8, 2015 the town voted to appropriate \$2.3 million for the construction, installation and start-up of a high-speed broadband network (275 yes, 59 no).

The same motion was approved by written ballot on September 10, 2015 (381 yes, 121 no).

Continuing discussions and analysis are being undertaken to decide on how best to implement such a broadband system.

With Kinder Morgan's Tennessee Gas Pipeline subsidiary planning a transmission pipeline through Ashfield and neighboring communities, our committee has undertaken research to understand the nature and magnitude of any costs and benefits associated with the project. Research and discussions will continue into 2016.

At this writing (January 2016), we are pleased to report that the town's financial position appears to be quite sound: our Stabilization Fund amounts to approximately \$418,000 and our Free Cash position was certified at approximately \$222,000. The combined amount of \$640,000 represents reserves of approximately 15% of our town's \$4.3 million annual budget.

Finally, we wish to thank both Ricki Carroll and Janet Rogers for their years of faithful service. Each had to resign because of increasing scheduling conflicts, but we have been fortunate in having the Moderator appoint Carol Lebold and Lindy Gougeon as replacements. We welcome them to our committee, and we look forward to continuing productivity in the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,
Ted Murray, Chair
Lindy Gougeon
Carol Lebold
David Newell
Tom Schreiber, Vice Chair

Fire Department

This has been a busy year for getting Fire Department items up to code. We had 6,000 feet of fire hose tested, 1,700 feet failed. Six ladders were tested and one failed. The fire pumps on the two large trucks had to be repaired to pass the test. Eight air packs were tested and with some minor work, they passed.

I would like to thank the anonymous donor who gave us some money to replace 400 feet of fire hose and replace two air bottles.

We have one new firefighter who joined us this year, Luke Henrici.

The firefighters all had to renew their CPR certifications this year.

We applied for two grants and received both of them. One was for schoolchildren and seniors and one was for forest, a 50/50 grant. We are applying for another Federal grant.

In 2015 there were 174 calls, 74 fire calls, and 102 medical calls. August was the busiest month with 21 calls. Sundays are the busiest days with 32 calls. 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. is the busiest time with 40 calls.

Respectfully submitted.
Delmar Haskins
Fire Chief

**Franklin Regional Council of Governments
Franklin County
Cooperative Building Inspection Program**

Dear Residents of Ashfield,

As you know, your town receives building, plumbing, gas and wiring inspection, and zoning enforcement services through the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program (FCCIP), a 39 year old shared service housed at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). We thank your town for your continued participation in the FCCIP, which allows small towns to have access to professional staff and state-of-the-art technology.

2015 was a busy year, permit wise, for the program. We issued 2,741 permits, including a significant number of insulation upgrades, solar array, and wood/pellet stove permits. The number of permits was higher in 2015 than in the previous year, the fees collected were also slightly higher. A total of 24 new dwelling units were constructed in our 15 member towns.

Our new online permitting program went live on July 1, 2011 and has issued 10,735 building, electrical, and plumbing/gas permits since then. The program allows you to apply, pay for, and track the progress of any permit online, saving you time and visits to our office in Greenfield. The program has 3,573 registered users. You can find it at www.frcog.org under the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program. Our website also includes helpful information on inspection requirements, permit costs, and contractor licensing.

In 2015, the FCCIP processed the following permits for Ashfield:

Residential Building Permits	141
Commercial Building Permits	8
Sheet Metal/Duct Permits	0
Electrical Permits	78
Plumbing Permits	24
Gas Permits	26
Certificates of Inspection	11

We would like to remind all residents of the importance of applying for permits for work done. Building, Electrical, and Plumbing/Gas permits are required by law and are an essential step in

ensuring the safety of our communities. Please feel free to call our office with any building or zoning questions at 774-3167, extension 2.

James D. Hawkins, Building Commissioner, jhawkins@frcog.org

James Cerone, Building Inspector, jcerone@frcog.org

Tom McDonald, Electrical Inspector, electric@frcog.org

Andy French, Plumbing/Gas Inspector, plumbing@frcog.org

Franklin Regional Retirement System

The Franklin Regional Retirement System is a government agency that serves the 492 retirees, 49 beneficiaries, 921 active employees, and 557 inactive members of the towns and agencies in Franklin County. We are organized under Chapter 34b, and subject to the provisions of Chapter 32 of the Massachusetts General Laws. We receive oversight on the state level from the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), which audits our operations and financial records every three years. We are also audited by independent auditors in the two intervening years, as well as a complete actuarial valuation every two years.

The retirement benefit we provide replaces participation in the Social Security system and is described as a “defined benefit”, which means that we pay monthly retirement benefits based on the age, salary, and number of years worked at the time a member of our system retires. To be a member, an employee in one of our government units must be working in a permanent position scheduled at 20 hours or more per week and earning \$5,000 or greater annually. Funding of these benefits begins with deductions from the member, and, combined with matching funds from the employing unit, are invested in a mix of stocks, bonds, and indexed funds. Investment earnings are a large part of the funding of retirement benefits, and the allocation of those funds are spread to a variety of sectors to take advantage of positive activity as it occurs in each sector.

Up until 1988, we were a “pay-as-you-go” system. In 1988 it was legislated that we begin saving to become “fully funded” over the ensuing 40 years. Fully funded means we have enough in reserves to pay for all the current and future potential benefits of our present membership. At the end of 2014, we are 79% funded at 26 years (65%) into the 40-year mandate.

Current reports and information can be found on our website: www.FRRSMA.com.

Green Community Committee

The primary activity for the Green Communities Committee in 2015 was initiating and enabling Ashfield's participation in the Solarize Mass program, in partnership with the towns of Plainfield and Buckland. The Solarize program provides homeowners and businesses with the opportunity to have photovoltaic panels installed on their property for solar electric generation at a reduced cost through economies of scale; installers group the orders from all three towns and pass savings on to the homeowners. Jim Cutler, Town Energy Manager and committee member, took the lead as Ashfield's "Solar Coach" and helped lead the three-town consortium to a highly successful conclusion.

There were delays and extra work. The first installer we selected declined to participate, necessitating a second round of soliciting, interviewing, and selection; we eventually selected Direct Energy Solar. Then long delays by the utility company, Eversource, in reviewing and approving interconnection applications caused delays in getting systems installed. Despite these hurdles, the program has resulted in the installation of 116 new solar electric systems in the three towns, 43 of those in Ashfield. These systems will have a combined capacity of 858 kilowatts; each of the three communities more than doubled their number of PV systems. The program resulted in 6.6 percent of all households getting solar electric systems, the second-highest in the Solarize Massachusetts program's 51 communities to date.

Green Communities grant money was used to fund the majority of a project that replaced all the obsolete exterior lighting at the Waste Water Treatment Plant with high efficiency LED lighting. The committee also resolved heat distribution problems in the Town Hall offices by installing additional radiation and researching and sizing additional insulation work for several offices, with installation planned for 2016. The committee also researched and sized the need for additional attic insulation in the library; installation will need to be completed in conjunction with planned roof repair work.

Mary Quigley
Jen Williams
Brian Clark, Chair
Jim Cutler, Energy Manager

Highland Ambulance EMS

Operations. Highland Ambulance is the primary ambulance service provider for the towns of Ashfield, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, and Williamsburg. Highland also provides primary back-up in the town of Worthington in support of Hilltown Ambulance of Huntington. Paramedics are on duty at Highland's station in Goshen from 6 a.m. until midnight seven days a week. During the midnight to 6 a.m. time period, Highland EMTs are assisted by Paramedics from other ambulance companies when the service of a Paramedic is required. Highland's active roster as of June 30, 2015 consisted of 37 members including 19 Paramedics and 18 EMTs.

Mission. The mission of Highland Ambulance EMS, Inc. is to provide the full range of emergency medical services to the member communities. These services include:

- Providing training and certification testing for all first responders
- Providing mandatory inoculations for all first responders
- Running blood pressure clinics for residents of the six towns
- Developing and practicing emergency response plans with the schools and camps in the member towns
- Conducting health and safety classes for the schools
- Working with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Homeland Security to develop emergency response plans for the member towns
- Providing mutual aid and paramedic intercept services to the neighboring communities
- Providing transport services
- Providing standby service for major emergency situations, e.g. house fire
- Providing standby service for major community events such as the Chesterfield Parade, the Ashfield Fall Festival and the Cummington Fair
- Responding to all 911 calls that may require emergency medical services

Emergency Responses. During FY 2015 Highland responded to 537 emergency calls of which 101 were no service. These are broken down by town as follows:

Ashfield, 81 (13 No Service)

Chesterfield, 58 (12 No Service)

Cummington, 63 (12 No Service)

Goshen, 70 (21 No Service)
 Plainfield, 42 (7 No Service)
 Williamsburg, 188 (21 No Service)
 Worthington, 14 (4 No Service)
 Other, 15 (5 No service)

Out of these responses, 351 required advanced life support (ALS) services.

Training. The following special training events were held:

- CPR training for Emergency Service Personnel.
- Quick clot training for EMT personnel and first responders.
- Ebola response review plan with Cooley Dickinson Hospital.
- New National (NCCR) EMT recertification classes for area EMTs.
- Medical Management Classes.
- ALS/BLS interface class for area EMTs.
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support training.
- Paramedic transition class to conform to National Core Curriculum.
- Dog and cat resuscitation class for all first responders.
- Application to become a certified AHA training site.

Community Involvement. Highland provided support to our communities including:

- Ambulance Coverage for Community events including the Chesterfield 4th of July Parade, the Cummington Fair, and the Ashfield Fall Festival.
- Safety Committee meeting at Sanderson Academy.
- Flu shot clinic for area first responders and EMT's.
- Ebola Response plan for the Ashfield Fire Department.
- Lock down drill and tour of the newly refurbished Anne T. Dunphy School in Williamsburg.

Operating Expenses in FY 2015 \$468,288.16

Cash On Hand June 30, 2015

Operating Funds	\$ 8,478.19
Building Fund	40,069.72
Ambulance Fund	150,029.59
Memorial Fund	3,086.30
Dresser Fund	3,697.37
Total Cash On Hand	\$205,361.17

Grants. \$25,400 from the Assistance to Fire Fighters Grants for the purchase of two automated CPR devices called LUCAS IIs. They can help improve the chance of survival for cardiac arrest patients.

Building Project. During this fiscal year, Highland Ambulance committed to building a permanent facility for its operations. From its very beginning, it was clear that Highland Ambulance was “borrowing” the Goshen Fire House and would need to eventually establish itself elsewhere. Highland Ambulance chose a lot at 12 Williams Drive in Goshen for its facility. Site development has commenced. Anticipated costs of the entire project will be in the range of \$750,000.

In Memoriam. We are saddened by the deaths of Francis Dresser of Goshen, at-large member of the Board and one of our founding members and Kit (Christopher) Smith, our valued Williamsburg representative, also a founding member and our Board President for over a decade. Both are greatly missed by all of us.

Respectfully submitted,
Highland Ambulance Board of Directors
Ashfield, Patricia Thayer
Chesterfield, Spencer Timm
Cummington, vacant
Goshen, Donald Boisvert
Plainfield, Michael Packard
Williamsburg, Leslie Smith
At-Large, Cassandra Morrey
At-Large, Bernard Forgea
At-Large, Douglas Mollison

Highway Department

The year began with a very busy winter. It was a long cold winter with lots of snow.

The remaining repair work from Storm Irene on Smith Branch Road was completed in the summer. It consisted of approximately 750 linear feet construction of a retaining wall and slope and reconstruction of the roadway itself.

Chapter 90 resurfacing work was done on Brier Hill Road and portions of Plainfield Road, Spruce Corner Road, and Beldingville Road.

I would like to thank the Select Board and the many other various boards and committees as well as fellow town employees for their support throughout the year.

Thank you to the Highway Department crew for their hard work and dedication

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas G. Poissant

Historical Commission

The Ashfield Historical Commission is responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning. We have ongoing projects, such as the inventory of historical properties and the updating of our historic properties inventory forms. We also take on shorter-term projects as they present themselves.

In 2015 we helped to coordinate the celebration of the town's 250th anniversary (sesquicentennial). The celebration started with a potluck dinner at the Town Hall on New Years Day (now an annual event), and continued with events throughout the year including parties, music and dance events, fireworks, children's activities, parades, beard growing contest, a time capsule, ice cutting on Ashfield Lake and more. The celebration was a grass-roots effort, made up of events that were conceived and organized by volunteers. We were able to do all of this and still not spend all of the \$5,000 the town put towards the event, thanks to eager volunteers who put hundreds of hours in to this. We would like to thank all who volunteered and participated in the 250th anniversary celebrations.

In 2015 we also heard about, and commented on cell tower siting, and are now involved in a similar process regarding the proposed gas pipeline and its potential impact on Ashfield's historical resources.

Our meetings are usually the fourth Thursday of the month and we invite people with ideas or questions about the historical preservation.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven Gougeon, Chair
Gerard McGovern
Jody Hall
Bill Scaife

History Project

The best source on the history of the Ashfield History Project and its product, History of the Town of Ashfield, Volume III (1960-2010), can be found on pages 524-526 of the book itself. Here let us add just a note or two.

The book, nine years in the making, was produced by the donation of countless hours of valuable professional time; not a single resident of Ashfield was paid anything for her or his work on it. The offices where we worked were also donated, first by the town's Park Commission, then by Belding Library, and finally by St. John's Episcopal Church.

During the course of our work, we were supported financially by generous donations from town's people. As we moved toward production and distribution, we received critically important support through appropriations at the Annual Town Meetings of 2013 and 2014. A Special Town Meeting in April 2015 paid for an initial printing of the book, before sales could begin to pay for additional printings.

It took a town to produce this book. We felt privileged to be part of it.

Phyllis Kirkpatrick and Don Robinson, co-editors

Members of the Editorial Board:

Dave Fessenden

Stuart Harris

Harry Keramidas

Patricia Thayer

Mary Priscilla Howes Fund

The Mary Priscilla Howes Fund was established in 1989 in memory of a much-loved Ashfield resident. The Finance Committee administers the fund. Income from the fund is to be used for cultural and historical projects and events that will benefit the citizens of Ashfield.

This past year the committee received one application for a grant. \$250 was awarded to Jackie Cooper toward her project titled “A Legacy of Rural Music, People, and Place: 1800-1940.” It was a nine-day workshop for musicians as part of Ashfield’s Sesquicentennial Celebration, designed to culminate in a public concert where performers – musicians and storyteller – would take the audience on a journey back in time, illustrating both local history and culture.

The balance of the Mary Priscilla Howes fund as of December 31, 2015 is \$11,862.86, compared to its beginning principal of \$11,116. To ensure we do not risk over-spending from the fund, the Finance Committee passed a motion to ensure that 25% of annual interest would be re-invested in the fund to preserve and grow the principal. The other 75% would continue to be available for grants for future projects and events.

Applications for a grant may be obtained at the town office or the Finance Committee, and they should be submitted to the Finance Committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Ted Murray, Chair
Lindy Gougeon
Carol Lebold
David Newell
Tom Schreiber

Report of the Superintendent Mohawk Trail Regional School District Hawlemont Regional School District

With the introduction of a half-day, district-wide preschool program, Mohawk experienced an enrollment increase of 50 students in 2015. Continuing a three-year positive trend, the quality of education within the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) rose considerably. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the MTRSD is classified as a Level 2 district with all of its schools classified as Level 1 or Level 2. There are five classification levels within the Commonwealth's system with Level 1 being the highest rating. The MTRSD is striving to become one of the higher performing school districts in Massachusetts by achieving a Level 1 classification, which requires all of our schools to be Level 1. With all Mohawk schools improving significantly in 2015, the year marked another significant step toward the MTRSD realizing this ambitious goal.

Mohawk District Highlights: Level 2

The percentage of Mohawk students achieving a rating of proficient or higher in English Language Arts (ELA) improved to 76%, reflecting a 9% improvement over the past four years. Mohawk students made gains in all three major content areas. Our ELA composite performance index (CPI) improved to 91.6; our mathematics CPI improved to 82.6; and our science CPI improved to 81.1. In both ELA and math, Mohawk's student growth percentile exceeded the state median of 50.

Mohawk Middle School-High School Highlights: Level 2 (School Percentile 46)

Mohawk's graduation rate rose to 86.5%, marking an 11% increase over the past five years. Of the graduates, approximately 80% plan to attend a four-year or a two-year college. On the SAT college entrance exams, Mohawk students outperformed the state average in reading, writing, and math.

Mohawk MS-HS achieved a school percentile ranking of 46, which is a 19-point improvement over the past three years. 90% of Mohawk 10th graders scored at the proficient or advanced level in ELA. 62% of Mohawk 10th graders scored at the advanced level in math compared to a 53% state-wide average. Mohawk 10th graders also outperformed the state-wide average in science and technology/engineering. Mohawk's 7th graders achieved student growth percentiles of 63 in ELA and 67 in math, far higher than the state median of 50.

The Mohawk MS-HS athletic program continued to flourish during 2015 with 38 teams and 20 sports, including the introduction of wrestling. Approximately 50% of the students participated in at least one sport, and 44% participated in multiple sports. The Mohawk MS-HS music and theater programs were also vibrant with impressive levels of student participation.

Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School: Level 1 (School Percentile 56)

BSE continued to perform at a very high level in 2015, achieving a second consecutive classification as a Level 1 school. Additionally, BSE's school percentile improved a whopping 14 points to the 56th percentile. Over the past five years, BSE has improved from a Level 3 classification to Level 1 and tripled its school percentile ranking! In tandem with this educational success, BSE's enrollment has increased 32% from 197 to 259.

Sanderson Academy. Level 2 (School Percentile 58)

Sanderson remained a very high performing school with a percentile ranking of 58. For the first time in the school's history, Sanderson offered preschool. The community response was compelling with approximately 40 three-year old and four-year old students enrolling, which more than doubled the District's forecast. As a result, we needed to add a second preschool class to accommodate the demand, and Sanderson's enrollment increased 17% to 149 students!

Colrain Central School. Level 2 (School Percentile 35)

Colrain students performed very well for the second consecutive year, which improved the school percentile ranking five points to 35. 72% of the students scored proficient or higher in ELA, which is a 39-point improvement over the past two years. Similarly, 67% of the students scored proficient or higher in math, which is a 23-point improvement over the same time frame. Both Colrain's ELA and math proficiency rates exceeded the state-wide average.

Heath Elementary School. Level 1 (School Percentile 59)

Heath Elementary achieved its third consecutive year of Level 1 classification, which is the best in the district. 73% of the students scored proficient or higher in ELA, which is a 15- point improvement over the prior year. 67% of the students scored proficient or higher in math. Both Heath's ELA and math proficiency rates also exceeded the state-wide average.

In 2015 the introduction of a half-day, district-wide preschool program reversed a long-term trend of declining enrollment in the

MTRSD. Additionally, all of our district schools improved significantly, resulting in classifications of Level 1 or Level 2 and several percentile rankings approaching 60, which is unprecedented. Our students, staff, families, administrators, and school committee deserve a great deal of credit for this continued high level of educational success. Our townspeople and town officials also deserve a great deal of credit for their ongoing support of our schools, which is essential to the MTRSD's continued success.

On behalf of our students, I thank our entire school community for your dedicated support of our children's education. THANK YOU!

Respectfully submitted,
Michael A. Buoniconti
Superintendent of Schools

Report of the Principal Mohawk Trail Regional High School

Of the 83 members of the Class of 2015, 60% went on to a four-year college and 25% went on to a two-year college. Collaboration, creative problem solving, and community building are important to the classroom and extracurricular learning experiences students have at Mohawk.

Reflecting our commitment to enhancing Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) learning opportunities, our middle school Project-Based Learning (PBL) courses are now STEM courses, with a continued emphasis on project-based, cooperative, and interdisciplinary learning but with increased focus on problem-solving and collaboration with science, technology, engineering, and math applications. These middle school courses provide students with hands-on learning experiences with local and global connections, as 7th grade students produced maple syrup from over 30 gallons of sap harvested from trees on campus, and 8th grade students created three-dimensional playhouses designed to fold to fit into a 9" x 12" mailing envelope that was delivered to children in Haiti, for instance. In the high school we introduced a Robotics course this year, where students develop computer programming skills through robotics applications. Many of our math teachers are using Inquiry-Based Learning approaches to math instruction, where students are engaged in problem-solving inquiry facilitated by their teachers.

Our school has embraced the use of community-building circles and restorative practices. Restorative Justice, often referred to as Restorative Practices, allows students to resolve conflicts and repair harm that has occurred within a community, through communication, reflection, and making changes in practice. Schools in this area and across the country have been transitioning to this evidence-based approach over the past few years. This year we established the Restorative Justice Classroom (RJC) to support students with this process and our faculty has begun using community-building circles in various settings.

Alumni connections continue to enrich the Mohawk experience. This year's commencement speaker was Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz, Mohawk Class of 1984. Recent graduates returned to school to share their experience with the transition to college and alumni have participated in an occasional speaker series to discuss their career paths.

Mohawk's Student Council has taken on an increasing role in promoting an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. This year's Booster Week activities and Bullying Prevention Week events reflected student initiative and commitment to creating a caring and compassionate school culture.

The role of our faculty and staff in school-wide leadership initiatives has grown as we have expanded the use of Professional Learning Communities and established an Instructional Leadership Team composed of staff, both teachers and paraprofessionals, who work with the Principal, Assistant Principal, and Curriculum Director to plan professional development and facilitate school-wide planning. Mohawk Arts Education Council, comprised of educators dedicated to enhancing the role of the arts at Mohawk, has taken on an increasing role, with vibrant programming evident in the visual arts displays within our school, diverse music programs with many public performances, and a wide variety of theatrical productions, including a student-directed adaptation of "The Breakfast Club" in addition to the annual musical and fall and late spring dramatic performances.

At the midpoint of the 2015-2016 school year, enrollment in grades 7-12 is 450. The seventh grade has 95 students and the eighth grade has 68. There are 75 students in the ninth grade, 71 in the tenth grade, 60 students in the junior class, and 81 students in the senior class. Four students are enrolled in our post-graduate program.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynn R. Dole
Principal

Report of the Principal Sanderson Academy

It is my pleasure to continue to serve as the Sanderson Academy principal. 2015 saw generally strong academic performances from students, some staffing additions, and work continuing on a number of mandates from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Our enrollment as of the end of the 2015 was 152 students in grades preschool through sixth grade, an increase of 27 students from the previous year. The number of students at each grade level was as follows: 40 children in the preschool, 12 children in kindergarten, 17 children in first grade, and 15 children in grade two, grade three had 19 students, fourth grade had 12 students, fifth grade had 13 students, and 24 students were in our sixth grade class. All classes were grouped heterogeneously.

The faculty for the 2015-2016 school year consisted of nine full-time classroom teachers, one special education teacher, one full-time reading teacher, and one full-time math interventionist. Specialists providing services in our school include a psychologist three days per week, a speech/language pathologist that services students three days per week, a full time nurse, and occupational and physical therapists, each for less than one half day per week. We have part time art, music, and physical education teachers who provide students with one hour of class time weekly in each subject area. Additional time is offered for band and chorus students in the upper grades. We also have a part-time library manager and eight paraprofessionals. We welcomed Melanie Manley and Amy Freeman as the first preschool teachers in Sanderson Academy history. We welcomed the return of Liz Tyler as the physical education teacher. We welcomed Shawn Thayer, Amanda Shero, Darrel Beymer, Veronica Smead, and Julia Meservey as paraprofessionals. We also welcomed Richard Page for one day a week to teach classroom music and chorus. In addition, we have four part-time before and after-school staff. This new program allowed for students in grades preschool through second grade to receive care from 7:30 to 8:30 and 3:00 to 5:30 each day for a daily rate.

The spring of 2015 saw Sanderson Academy students again performing well on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Achievement System (MCAS) tests. In the three areas assessed, English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science and Technology, our students performed at levels, which were similar to or better than the performances of other

students in our District or State. About 77% of our students performed in the advanced and proficient category in English Language Arts and about 65% of students performed in the advanced and proficient category in mathematics.

The Sanderson Academy Safety Committee continues to meet on a monthly basis to address school safety. We continually revise our safety binders. We have monthly fire drills, at least three lockdown drills a year, and school evacuation drills. Many of these drills include local and state emergency service personnel. Much progress has been made on the trail to connect the school to the town garage, our evacuation site.

Thank you citizens of Ashfield and Plainfield for all you do to support your community school!

Respectfully submitted,
Emma Liebowitz M.Ed.
Principal

Special Education and Pupil Services

The districts continue to support and provide students with an identified disability an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan. An IEP provides direct service with accommodations and modifications. A 504 Plan provides accommodations that allow a student access to the general curriculum. The district continues to increase the use of Response to Intervention (RTI). This model enables schools to provide support to students based on regular assessment and data aimed at targeting more specific areas of concern or need. A student does not require an IEP or a 504 to benefit from RTI. The most recent MCAS data indicated that our students in the high needs population showed growth in their progress this year. This is a direct result of the support and direct instruction via an IEP, 504 and tiered instruction.

For many years the district has supported several substantially separate programs for students requiring a higher level of instruction and support. Historically, a student requiring this level of education may be placed in an out of district school at a high cost to the district. Research suggests that each time a student is placed outside of their home district, it decreases their investment in their education. Out of district placements are made only when all other options have been explored and assessed. The district currently has the following programs:

MSC (Mohawk Supported Classrooms): Classrooms are located in the Middle School and in the High School. Each class has a special education teacher providing direct instruction for core academic courses. The program provides academic and emotional support to students with a social emotional disability and has one clinician providing group and individual therapy as well as on going case management. Both programs are staffed with additional paraprofessionals as needed.

MVP (Mohawk Vocational Program): Program supports students with severe special needs. The program has a special education teacher a vocational coordinator and additional paraprofessionals as required. The program runs a self-sustaining daily coffee shop for school staff.

The Middle School has a similar program for students with severe special needs, supported by a special educator and paraprofessionals.

Starting with the 2015 school year, we added a program at BSE for students ages pre-School - 2nd grade. The program is run by a behaviorist, with support from special education teachers and paraprofessionals. This program has enabled students on the autism

spectrum and with behavioral challenges to access their general education classroom with varying levels of support.

Each of these programs is designed to maximize the amount of time in the general education classroom while at the same time provide a direct well-designed individual program for each student. There is not a set amount of time in or out of the program. It is dictated by the student's level of need.

Please do not hesitate to call with questions regarding special education or civil rights.

Respectfully Submitted,
Leann Loomis
Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Mary Lyon Foundation

This year the Mary Lyon Foundation is celebrating its 25th anniversary of providing innovative support for local education. Established in 1990 and incorporated in 1991, 2016 will be a year to reflect on past accomplishments and future challenges. Stay tuned for news of an upcoming celebration!

We are grateful for the many generous gifts of time, talent, and treasure by individuals, businesses, and organizations, which make our work possible. We were pleased to be awarded \$15,000 for the Mini-Grant Program and Student Assistance Fund by the United Way of Franklin County, greatly expanding our capacity to support the needs of students, families, and teachers throughout West County. We especially appreciate the continuing financial support of the Myrtle Atkinson Foundation, the Cleveland Dodge Foundation, Bristol Myers Squibb, and the Harper Gerry family. We are also indebted to the Staples Foundation and the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts for grants to purchase new equipment.

The Annual Lyonnaise in May showcased excellence in education with a presentation by Massachusetts Teacher of the Year Dr. Jeffrey Shea, student performances, a display of Mini-Grant projects, and presentations of the following awards: the George Needham Business Award to Baker Pharmacy, Jim Boulger Spirit of Adventure Award to Gabe Coler, Outstanding Mohawk Alumni Award to Brendan Lattrell, and Pat Kerrins Career Award to Melinda Gougeon, Ed.D.

In August, the Annual Children's Literature Festival once again explored local history with literature, crafts, and visits to nearby sites. In September, with support from the Pioneer Valley History Network, MassHumanities, the Buckland, Colrain, Heath, and Shelburne councils of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and a number of sponsors, the lively Hilltowns History Fair and Conference held at Mohawk Trail Regional School brought history to life for all generations.

Through the generosity of sponsors and raffle donors, an enthusiastic audience, many volunteers, and our 25 teams of intrepid spellers, the 10th Annual Mary Lyon Foundation Community Spelling Bee raised more money than ever before - approximately \$8,000 - for educational projects. This spirited annual event is a testament to the community's strong commitment to excellence in education! Grand champions were once again the Spelling Beans sponsored by Shelburne Falls Coffee Roasters

In May, Founder and Executive Director, Sue Samoriski, welcomed Sheila Damkoehler to serve as Co-Executive Director. Our part-time staff includes Business Manager Gina Sieber, volunteer Office Manager Sandy Gilbert, and Student Intern Sequoia LeBreux. Members of our Board of Directors are Sylvia Orcutt, President; Marion Taylor, Past President; Hugh Knox, Vice President; Karen Fairbrother, Treasurer; Sharon Hudson, Corresponding Secretary; Suzanne Conway Legreze, Recording Secretary; Susan Schuman, Larry Wells, Robin Huntley and Mohawk students Emma Guyette, Lilly Wells and Eli Shearer. We are very grateful for their time and commitment!

Susan Samoriski and Sheila Damkoehler,
Co-Executive Directors

Carl H. Nilman Scholarship Fund

The fund was established under the provisions of the will of Carl H. Nilman for the purpose of providing scholarships. Recipients shall reside in the School District and be graduates of the Mohawk Trail Regional High School who desire and are deemed worthy of post high school education or training and who are in need of financial assistance.

This year the Awards Subcommittee read 76 applications, 38 were from seniors and 38 from previous graduates of Mohawk. \$33,200.00 is to be awarded using 30% for seniors and 70% for graduates. The committee feels that seniors have multiple scholarship opportunities from other sources while graduates have far fewer resources. 30 scholarships totaling \$10,400.00 were awarded to seniors (79% of applicants). 32 scholarships totaling \$22,800.00 were given to graduates (84% of applicants).

From 1991 to 2015 a total of \$876,625.00 has been awarded in scholarships, Mohawk seniors have received \$270,775.00 and \$605,850.00 has been awarded to Mohawk graduates.

The application is once again available on line to the graduates. Seniors can pick their applications up at Mohawk High School.

There are 15 members on the Carl H. Nilman Scholarship Committee. One from each of the nine member towns in the district, three at-large members appointed by the School Committee, plus a past School Committee member, current School Committee member and the chairman of the School Committee. Members from the nine towns are: Sheila Graves (Ashfield), Marion Scott (Buckland), Marge Porrovecchio (Charlemont), Michelle Hillman (Colrain), Jonathan Diamond (Heath), Alice Parker (Hawley), Allen Irvine (Plainfield), Marion Taylor (Shelburne), and Rowe (open).

Officers are: Marge Porrovecchio and Robin Hartnett, Co-Chair, and Marion Scott, Secretary. Subcommittees: Finance, Marion Taylor, Robin Hartnett, David Engle/Eric Sumner. Scholarship: Marge Porrovecchio, Sheila Graves, Michelle Hillman, Marion Scott, and Allen Irvine.

The Mohawk community owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Nilman for his foresight in supporting higher education for the students of the Mohawk Trail Regional High School. The committee members are honored to bring the wishes of his will to fruition.

Students of any age who are graduates of Mohawk (and were living in the nine town area at the time of graduation) are encouraged to apply for scholarships to help meet their continuing education needs.

Call the Guidance Office at Mohawk for information regarding requirements and deadlines.

Respectfully submitted,
Marion E. Scott, Secretary

Fred Wells Trustees

Funds available for the fiscal year 2015/2016 are \$236,658.00 (which includes unused scholarship money from 2013/2014 that was reallocated to the Scholarship fund.)

EDUCATION: The Trustees received 271 applications and approved 253 students to receive \$207,053.00. This amount includes the two \$1,000.00 scholarships in memory of Ralph and Hilda Haskins. The Trustees spent many hours on the selection process to ensure that as many students possible could receive scholarship aid.

HEALTH: Four (4) programs were approved totaling \$17,600.00

Community Action-WIC Program	\$5,000.
FCHCC: Meals on wheels	\$7,000.
Community Health Center	\$2,250.
NELCWIT	<u>\$3,350.</u>
	\$17,600.

AGRICULTURE: An amount of \$11, 905.00 was allowed by the Trustees for payment:

Franklin County Agricultural Society	\$7,701.
Heath Agricultural Society	\$3,186.
Shelburne Grange Fair	<u>\$1,018.</u>
	\$11,905.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Robinson

Park Commission

2015 was a successful year at the Park with the completion of the Upper Park Restoration Project. The Abbatiello family assembled and installed two new picnic tables, three benches, and two grills; one set of which is handicapped accessible. John Nawrocki ordered and organized the planting of five cherry trees and watered them throughout the summer. The Girl Scout troop built three bluebird houses, which were installed by Tom McCrumm.

The Japanese knotweed invasion is being kept under control with more frequent mowing by Doug Cranson and Kyle Taylor. Fanwort in the water has been removed by dive teams in the Spring and Fall and the Colers continue to remove the water chestnuts by hand. Unfortunately, community participation in our Spring and Fall cleanups has been nonexistent requiring more service from Twin Pines.

The life guard team this past summer included Amar Abbatiello, the Compton-Burch brothers, substitute Molly Donahue and a volunteer from the YMCA. We had 21 children taking swimming lessons with Aiden from the Y who was just terrific.

The canoe auction again brought in some revenue for the dock fund with only two vessels remaining at the boat launch by October 31. So we are making progress. It became apparent last summer that our dock was in need of replacing. So, efforts at raising \$5,000 have begun. We have hired an engineer and will start the permitting process, once we choose what materials would be ideal for new decking.

Sally Rice has replaced Maryellen Abbatiello and is our acting scribe and treasurer. Kyle continues as our “Mr. Fixit,” plumber and buoy boy. We continue to welcome and appreciate all our volunteers.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Haupt, Sally Rice and Kyle Taylor

Personnel Board

The Ashfield Personnel Board is responsible for keeping the Ashfield Town Personnel Policy Manual current. During 2015 the Board met numerous times in order to complete needed the updates due to changes in laws as well as needs of the town. With the aid of the previous board members, who began the updating process, the benefits section of the policy was approved by the Select Board and implemented during 2015. This brought benefits such as sick time, vacation time, and personal time into line with current regulations. Sitting members have continued to meet to bring the balance of the Personnel Policy and Procedures Manual up to date.

Upon completion of this process a draft version was passed to the Select Board for review and comment. Town Counsel now has the opportunity to comment. Once the approval process has been completed, a final approved policy will be printed; copies will be available to all town employees.

This year the Personnel Board was tasked by the Select Board with writing a job description for the position of Town Administrator. This statement of expectations was used by the Select Board to hire and fill the position of Town Administrator.

As we move into 2016, this committee anticipates the addition of another member to replace Ricki Carroll, the Finance Committee representative, who recently resigned. As an employer herself, she made many valuable contributions to our work. Many thanks for her time and incite.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Phelps, Chairperson
Thomas Carter, Select Board Representative
Ricki Carroll, Finance Committee Representative
Wayne B. Farrell, Member at Large
Jennifer Markens, Member at Large

Planning Board

This year a new member was elected to the planning Board. Jim Cutler has begun a five-year term at this volunteer position.

The planning board consulted with many citizens with concerns and questions about land use in our town. The two issues most discussed were the pipeline and telecommunications.

A moderate amount of property boundary changes were brought to us for ANR signatures.

Our long-term planning efforts continue to look at encouraging senior housing in the town center as well as elsewhere in town.

The Planning Board has completed proposals to add an associate member bylaw and to bring our telecommunications bylaw up to date. We expect to bring these changes to town meeting in 2016.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Fitzgerald Chair
Alan Rice
Lauren Preston-Wells
Ken Miller
Jim Cutler

Police Department

This year has been a year of change for the police department. We have had some officers come and some go on to further their careers elsewhere. With that said I wish the best for them all. Currently the department has six patrolmen and myself. While there has been some change over in personnel, the department as a whole is working well together.

On the community policing front the department hosted a meet and greet here at the Town Hall. The public was invited to stop in, chat with the officers, and get to know the officers on a more one to one basis. I would like to thank all my officers for their time spent reaching out to the public and thank you to the guests for stopping in. The department also hosted a movie night for the kids and served popcorn and juice. While the participation was low in both of these community outreach projects I will continue to strive to bring the police department and the community together. This department is eager to hear any community policing ideas you may have.

Thank you for your continued support.

Diane Wilder
Chief of Police

Ashfield School Department Vocational, Technical, and Agricultural Education

Ashfield maintains a town school department for vocational education students, grades 9 to 12 inclusive. It is financially separate from the Mohawk Trail Regional School District. Our town tuitions these students to the Franklin County Technical School (Turners Falls) and Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School (Northampton). Ashfield is responsible for the cost of tuition and transportation of our students, and receives state education aid from the Commonwealth (chapter 70 funds), which covered only 21% of cost compared to 31% a year ago. Complicating this was the state's elimination of chapter 74 transportation reimbursement for small towns – a loss to Ashfield of over \$63,000 this year.

Student Enrollment – Enrollment at the two schools has recently increased as more students are expressing interest in the technical and agricultural trades. Enrollment remained level at 19 students.

Franklin County Technical School – opening enrollments in Sept. below
* [enrollment @ 1-1-16 is 11]

School Year	# Grade 9	# Grade 10	# Grade 11	# Grade 12	Total 9-12
2014-2015	2	5	2	3	12
2015-2016	2	2	6	2	12

Smith Vocational & Agricultural High School – opening enrollments in Sept. * [enroll. @ 1-1-16 is 5]

School Year	# Grade 9	# Grade 10	# Grade 11	# Grade 12	Total 9-12
2014-2015	4	1	0	2	7
2015-2016	1	5	1	0	7

* During the fall of 2015, two students withdrew, and one student moved to another town.

Congratulations to Franklin Tech graduates Shauntel Parker, Cooper Deane, and Christine Prothero as well as to Smith School graduates David Christenson and Owen Robertson, all who graduated in June of 2015.

Appropriation and Estimated Expense for Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016. – The town appropriated the following amounts for vocational education at the May 2014 + 2015 annual town meetings:

[For FY 2016: Smith School Base Tuition @ \$17,556. Franklin Tech Base Tuition @ \$17,550]

<u>Item</u>	<u>FY 15 Appropriation</u>	<u>FY 15 Expended</u>	<u>FY 16 Appropriation</u>
Regular Base Tuition	\$414,290	\$342,090	\$379,648
Special Educ. Tuition	28,745	17,979	24,602
Transportation	94,534	77,749	86,063
total	\$537,569	\$437,818	\$490,313

Estimated expense for 2015-16 will likely be around \$400,000. This significant reduction is primarily due to: 1) one student who left Smith School, and one who left Franklin Tech; 2) one Smith student who moved to another town; and 3) one student whose tuition will be paid by Greenfield.

Oversight – Currently, the Finance Committee is responsible for the administration and oversight of the town vocational school department. Each year the committee appoints one of its members to serve as department coordinator.

Vocational Education Advisory Committee – Representatives from Ashfield, Charlemont, Plainfield, and Hawley continue to coordinate and oversee the vocational-ed programs of the four ‘tuitioning towns.’ Last year, the committee implemented a cost-savings program using gasoline from the Ashfield Highway Facility. The pilot was successful and saved the four towns over \$20,000. It is being continued this year. VEAC is working closely with the state Dept. of Education and Mohawk officials, endeavoring to implement improvements in operations and administrative changes. New governance models are being explored.

Poppy Doyle is Mohawk’s member to the committee. Mary FitzGibbon has been replaced by Kaycee Warren as Ashfield’s member and Lynn Taylor has been appointed as alternate. David Newell continues to serve as the VEAC Clerk and administrator.

Respectfully submitted,

David Newell

Ashfield Finance Committee & Vocational Education Advisory Clerk

Sewer Commission

The most impressive improvement to the treatment plant in 2015 was the repair and replacement of the external sodium vapor lighting with new LED lights. This project was funded by the Green Communities Committee. The treatment plant is now better illuminated than it has been in years, energy requirements are reduced due to the LED technology, and bulb life expectancy is significantly increased. Safety is improved for nighttime meetings and emergencies and the overall effect is bright and cheery after dark.

Another building improvement in 2015 was the replacement of the metal double doors at the headworks and the back door to the conference room. Both of these doors were badly deteriorated at the bottom and were no longer weather tight. The new doors are much more resistant to salt and corrosive atmospheres and should last a long time. A short roof is being installed over the back door to prevent ice buildup and insure a safe entrance.

The heating system was fully converted to propane this year. The underground oil tank has also been removed to alleviate concerns about possible future leakage. The insulation of the marsh done in 2013 is proving beneficial. Fuel consumption has dropped to around 22 percent of previous usage for that building.

The treatment plant continues to function without permit violations, but your assistance is needed in keeping flows within the permitted limit. Sump pumps should be directed outside, not into plumbing fixtures & pipes. This is very important in periods of high ground water and heavy rain that can occur during spring thaw and after hurricanes. Frozen pipe prevention also affects the treatment plant. If you have to run your water during the winter, it should be done with a garden hose into the yard. Even small trickles can increase the flows at the treatment plant if they run over extended periods and are introduced by multiple users.

Sewer rates have held very steady over the past 10 years. In fiscal 2015 the volume-based rate was only \$0.61 higher per thousand gallons than it was 10 years before. The fixed quarterly rate was \$7.40 higher than in fiscal 2005. However, the treatment plant is faced with increasing expenses as the infrastructure ages and equipment becomes obsolete. The Enterprise Fund is the savings account for the sewer system and it is important to keep some money in reserve for big ticket expenses. This will help to make the sewer rates less volatile in the future. We are also presently faced with a \$20,000 engineering study

required by the state for permit renewal in fiscal 2017. For these reasons, the sewer commissioners decided to increase the rates in fiscal 2016. We hope that you will be understanding about these increases, given that rates have held fairly steady for a number of years.

Thanks to the Green Energy Committee and the Fall Festival Committee for their contributions to improved operations at the treatment plant.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Hoff, Dan Lovett & Thomas Miner Jr.

Senior Center

It has been another busy year for the Senior Center. All three member towns continued to show an increase in use of services and programs. Ashfield increased usage both within Ashfield, at the Center in Shelburne Falls and with use of the FRTA Van Service. We were sad to lose longtime participant Lorraine Dyer. Her spirit and sense of adventure was contagious and inspired all of us. We have welcomed some new Ashfield residents who have made use of available programs with some visiting regularly. In 2015 a new monthly drop-in session for residents to meet with Outreach Coordinator Leanne Dowd was added and meets at St. John's Corner. We are grateful to St. John's for the use of their facility for this program and the Healthy Bones and Balance weekly exercise class led by local volunteers. Leanne is available in Ashfield and at the Center for drop-in meetings or by appointment and provides support for caregivers, information on services and assistance with applications. She will also make a home visit for people unable to travel outside their home.

Monthly luncheons continued. Entertainment was featured at some of the events including a luncheon at the Ashfield Lake House. We thank the new owners of the Lake House and the Ashfield First Congregational Church for hosting us and look forward to enjoying a group lunch at Elmer's this spring.

The annual picnic was held at Belding Park on a beautiful day. It is a wonderful way to celebrate summer together. All are welcome and often grandchildren and grandparents come together.

Transportation is available for medical appointments Monday through Friday to anywhere in Franklin County. Riders call the Center to request rides, reservations are taken, and one of our van drivers picks up at the residents (60+years) at their home. Curb to curb service is offered. Small fees are charged per contract to defray costs of the service. As medical rides and weekly shopping fill the two van schedules consistently, we are working to secure use of a third van which, will help with rides to the Center and within Ashfield for social activities and programs.

This year we welcomed new Council on Aging member Steven Zamojski. He joins Doug Field and Wayne Wickland in representing Ashfield seniors. COA members are also part of the Council on Aging Advisory Board with members of all three towns. Together the Board works with the Director and Select Boards to best serve residents needs and interest. This year a grant-funded study followed a previous study of

the population shifts in the towns. Ashfield is anticipating almost 50% of its residents will be 60 years+ by 2020, though the State average is 35%. With these growing increases and increased demand on the Senior Center facility, a second study was done this fall to look at possible expansion options. Renovation of a number of existing facilities as well as new construction were considered. Results of the study were presented. No specific plans have been determined. Public input will be sought to consider next steps.

Please contact your COA members or staff at the Center for any information. A free newsletter is available for pick up, by mail, and on our web pages at www.townofshelburne.com/departments/seniorcenter. Join us and share what is available to other Ashfield residents.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathleen Buntin
Senior Center Director

Technology Committee, Municipal Light Plant, and Wired West

The technology committee is responsible for the information technology budget for the town. This includes the town website, computer systems (PCs, storage), internet, and telephone. The committee also served as the primary IT support for town staff (PC maintenance, software help, password management, etc.) In 2015 the committee participated in an IT audit through the Hampshire Regional Council of Governments and received a report for improving the IT systems in town. One aim in 2015 was to improve the quality of IT support for town staff by hiring an IT consultant company. The committee evaluated proposals from several consultant companies and settled on a firm that will begin serving the town in 2016, including the Belding Library.

The Ashfield Municipal Light Plant is the formal means by which the town is a member of the regional cooperative called WiredWest, which is working on deploying a fiber optic broadband network in western Massachusetts. The technology committee is also involved in advocating for affordable broadband for all residents. In 2015 the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and WiredWest helped organize borrowing authorizations in western Massachusetts towns that would provide approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the capital funding for construction and startup of fiber-to-the-home networks.

WiredWest developed a formal operating agreement among participating towns, in which the network would be owned by the cooperative with proportional ownership among members based on their capital contribution, and WiredWest refined its business model, in which it planned to create a new service business to provide network operations and internet, voice and television service to subscribers. However, in December 2015 the MBI notified towns that it did not support the WiredWest ownership structure and questioned the sustainability of its business plan.

At a September special town meeting, Ashfield authorized borrowing of up to \$2.3 million to fund a broadband network with up to \$1.4 million available from the state. Fortunately and unlike in other towns in our region, the borrowing authorization language did not require Ashfield to work with WiredWest and discussion at our STM was clear that a final decision on the implementation of a broadband network would be made only after further evaluation of our options. To this end, the technology committee met jointly with the Finance Committee and Select Board during the fall and early winter to hear

presentations from different groups and discuss the details of different options. By the end of 2015 the Select Board had agreed that our best option was to be part of the MBI's regional fiber-to-the-home network, discounting other technologies or private enterprise partners, but the decision on whether to work with WiredWest remained unresolved.

Members: David Kulp (committee chair, MLP manager, WiredWest delegate), Brian Clark, Juliet Jacobson (website lead), Andy Smith (WiredWest alternate delegate), George Stephan

Town Clerk

January to December

Vital Statistics -1915

Births 27
 Marriage 10
 Deaths 12
 Allison G. Howes –Town Clerk

Vital Statistics- 2015

Births 8
 Marriage 6
 Deaths 11
 Ann Dunne-Town Clerk

Elections Results 2015:

Annual Local Election, May 02, 2015

1,317 Registered Voters
 161 Ballots Cast
 12.22 % turnout

Special Local Election, September 10, 2015

1,322 Registered Voters
 502 Ballots Cast
 38% turnout

Of Registered Voters: 1,341 (as of Dec 31, 2015)

Party	# of registered voters	Political Designation	# of registered voters
Democrat	444	Green Party	2
Green-Rainbow	5	Libertarian	3
Republican	83	Unenrolled	804

A special thank you to all our Election Workers and Tally Counters who serve our community on Election Day.

Election Workers 2015

CONSTABLES

John LaBelle, Betty Lesure, Warren Kirkpatrick

WARDENS

Nancy Garvin, Anne Yuryan, Lynn Taylor, Sally Yates

PRECINCT CLERK

Duncan Colter

ELECTION WORKERS

Sally Yates, Lynn Taylor, Kyle Taylor, Wayne Farrell, Doug Cranson, Poppy Doyle, Barbara Maloney, Honey Boyden, Jean Cherdack, Dianne Field, Hannah Monohon, Laura Spencer,

TALLY SHEET COUNTERS

Virginia Wiswell, Betty Stewart, Sandy Lilly, Kyle Taylor, Phil Lussier, Faye Whitney, Buz Eisenberg, Marcine Eisenberg, Lynn Taylor, Mary Fitz-Gibbon

Hand Count Votes at ATM and STM

Nina Coler, Marcine Eisenberg, Sandy Lilly, Caroline Murray, Betty Stewart, Faye Whitney

Dog License Program

A total of 473 dog tags/licenses were issued in 2015. Fees generated are deposited in the revolving dog fund, and are used to fund this program and to purchase dog tags.

Records Preservation

We continue to preserve one book/volume per fiscal year. Using donations from our Records Preservation Fund- funded by gifts/donations from our citizens.

We preserved the following volumes in 2015.

Town Meeting Records

1835-1854, Vol. 8

Cost \$ 1, 934.00

Submitted by

Ann Dunne

Town Clerk

Town Accountant's Report: Fiscal Year 2015

FY2015 General Fund Revenues Budget to Actual Summary:

Revenues	Budget	Actual	Variance
Taxes	3,753,017	3,751,018	1,999
Licenses and Permits	3,000	783	2,218
Intergovernmental	284,229	282,379	1,850
Charges for Services	56,000	64,071	-8,071
Fees and Fines	6,500	12,329	-5,829
Unclassified	12,500	18,157	-5,657
Transfer from other funds	17,450	17,450	0
Investment Earnings	1,000	1,860	-860
Total Revenues	4,133,696	4,148,046	-14,350

FY2015 General Fund Expenditures Budget to Actual Summary:

Expenditures	Budget	Actual	Variance
General Government	358,272	289,415	68,857
Public Safety	256,759	233,657	23,102
Public Works	696,015	653,164	42,851
Community Services	228,385	209,044	19,341
Education	2,493,455	2,463,767	29,688
Insurance and Benefits	152,951	124,318	28,633
Unclassified	50,482	47,154	3,328
Debt Service	217,647	216,275	1,372
Total Expenditures	4,453,966	4,236,794	217,172

Special Revenue Accounts

	30-Jun-15			
	<u>Beg</u>			
	<u>Balance</u>	<u>YTD Rev</u>	<u>YTD Exp</u>	<u>Balance</u>
<u>Highway Funds</u>				
	-			
MA Highway-C90 FY08	177,503.61	177,503.	-373,814.	-373,814.
WRAP Highway Grant	0.00	0.00	44,450.70	44,450.70
<u>Revolving Funds</u>				
Wetlands Protection Fund	4,379.11	0.00	-214.76	4,164.35
Dog Revolving Fund	13,336.03	2,316.00	-2,734.42	12,917.61
Youth Comm Revolving Fund	571.50	0.00	0.00	571.50
Library Fees Revolving Fund	3,851.45	2,083.00	-2,500.00	3,434.45
Swimming Program Rev Fund	1,285.45	280.00	-824.00	741.45
<u>Other Special Revenue Funds</u>				
Sales of History Books	0.00	10,735.	-4,124.71	6,610.29
Recycling Grant	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00
Bed Bug Education Grant	0.00	500.00	-500.00	0.00
CDBG DR Grant	0.00	46,178.	40,178.00	6,000.00
Food Inspection Grant	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00
Employee Wellness Grant	821.18	800.00	-978.82	642.36
Tree Donations	1,494.87	0.00	0.00	1,494.87
Flu Clinic Donations	1,429.00	0.00	0.00	1,429.00
Sanderson Barn-Ins Donation	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Con Comm Clerk Donations	77.87	0.00	0.00	77.87
Human Relations	12.87	0.00	0.00	12.87
Record Preservation	4,430.48	0.00	-925.00	3,505.48
Police Donations Fund	610.36	672.85	-529.67	753.54
O'Donnell Donations	101.34	0.00	0.00	101.34
Steeple Donations	2,686.82	0.00	0.00	2,686.82
TH Preservation &	13,941.18	770.00	0.00	14,711.18

Renovation				
Ambulance Donations	995.24	0.00	0.00	995.24
Grant Program Income	19,392.80	0.00	-5,000.00	14,392.80
Cultural Council				
Donations	431.22	0.00	0.00	431.22
Septic Repair Program	74,971.53	37.12	0.00	75,008.65
Belding Endowment- Library	2,816.95	0.00	0.00	2,816.95
Library Investment			-	
Earnings	15,207.86	10,710.	16,218.96	9,699.24
J Donald Art Fund	483.97	0.00	0.00	483.97
Belding Endowment-Park	916.70	171.00	0.00	1,087.70
Green Energy Grant	884.32	6,341.25	-9,341.87	-2,116.30
Solarize Mass	0.00	2,500.00	-212.39	2,287.61
K-9 Support Fund	58.87	0.00	0.00	58.87
Library Donations, Fundraising	7,501.38	8,193.40	0.00	15,694.78
Town History Fund	10,806.56	437.50	-6,440.10	4,803.96
T H Floor Preservation Fund	4,401.54	0.00	0.00	4,401.54
Historic Commission Donations	300.70	0.00	0.00	300.70
WMRLS Grant	689.52	0.00	0.00	689.52
Town Hall Employee Fund	366.67	200.00	-426.41	140.26

State & Federal Grants

FEMA Snow Emergency Funds	363.54	0.00	0.00	363.54
FEMA Storm Emergency Funds	-12,175.88	73,784.	57,090.58	4,517.97
Council on Aging Grant	3,761.50	8,000.00	-8,000.00	3,761.50
Library State Aid	0.00	4,693.36	-4,693.36	0.00
Cultural Council	2,930.44	8,550.00	-8,311.00	3,169.44
Failed Septic System Grant	10,064.08	0.00	0.00	10,064.08
Fire Dept SAFE Grant	0.00	12,526.	11,256.92	1,269.08
Volunteer Firefighters Grant	389.26	0.00	0.00	389.26
EDS Grant	0.00	7,628.99	-6,958.00	670.99
Agricultural Innovation Gr	592.15	0.00	-25.20	566.95
Forest Fire Grant	-958.15	3,765.00	0.00	2,806.85

Enterprise Fund

WWTP Fund	107,436.39	107,719.	-109,937.	105,218.
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Capital Projects

Capital Project-Highway Garage	1,640.43	0.00	0.00	1,640.43
Capital Project - Highway Truck	0.00	88,206	88,206.00	0.00

Trust Funds

Mary Priscilla Howes Fund	12,721.67	474.26	-900.00	12,295.93
William Hathaway Fund	41,818.03	79.43	-50.00	41,847.46
Susan Howes Fund	8,085.18	13.82	0.00	8,099.00
Major King Fund	18,919.44	34.54	0.00	18,953.98
Eliza Miller Fund	36,159.02	69.07	0.00	36,228.09
Whiting Street Fund	9,058.20	20.72	0.00	9,078.92
Henry Taylor Fund	20,045.06	44.87	0.00	20,089.93
Salmon Miller Fund	38,218.44	82.89	0.00	38,301.33
			-	
Fred Cross General Fund	47,933.39	95.96	10,000.00	38,029.35
Other Cemetery Fund	1,250.00	0.00	0.00	1,250.00
Mabelle Jordan Fund	42.72	0.09	0.00	42.81
Fred Cross Library Fund	5,000.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00
Fred Cross Cemetery Fund	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00
Belding Endowment-Park/Library	20,522.38	0.00	0.00	20,522.38
Mary Morrill Ellwell Sands Fund	5,060.94	10.13	0.00	5,071.07
Stabilization Fund	418,092.38	3,337.41	0.00	421,429.

Town Hall Building Committee

The committee facilitated several projects this year including: a storage rack for window screen and storm panels (lumber donated), new back and flanking stage curtains (to be completed), additional shelves for the town treasurer (lumber donated), new writing surfaces for the voting booths, three new rugs in the lower hall, new LED stage ceiling lights, and painting repairs to the lower hall.

We welcomed our newest member and Town Hall Steward, Kyle Taylor, who pitches in willingly. He has replaced several broken windowpanes, including some which fell out recently. He checks to make sure the Town Hall is secure.

The committee would like to purchase more storm windows to protect the historic sashes, thus allowing for their complete restoration. We encourage and welcome donations to the Town Hall Restoration Fund.

We have completed and posted on the town website a more user-friendly Town Hall Use Application, approved by the Select Board.

The committee is planning for the needed repairs to the slate roof, to install a modern exit system for the three north-facing old front doors, and to begin the engineering process for needed repairs to the steeple. A front curtain for the stage would slow heat loss in the upper hall. It could include an Ashfield scene – a volunteer fundraising project?

We thank the Community for its ongoing support and for the respect it shows towards this architectural gem we use as our Town Hall.

Stuart Harris, Chair
Nancy Gray Garvin, Secretary
Kyle Taylor, Town Hall Steward
Douglas Cranson
Mary Quigley
Donna Scott

Town Tax Collector

	Real Estate Balances As of June 30, 2015	Personal Property Balances As of June 30, 2015	Motor Vehicle Balances As of June 30, 2015
2015	\$108,425.00	\$2,402.00	\$9,730.00
2014	\$43,753.00	\$2,583.00	\$2,004.00
2013	\$26,076.00	\$1,159.00	\$984.00
2012	\$4,377.00	\$1,038.00	\$5,082.00
Prior years	\$12,242.00	\$1,467.00	\$4,745.00
Totals	\$194,873.00	\$8,649.00	\$22,545.00
Grand Total	\$226,067.00		

All payments are due on the quarterly system, with due dates as follows: first quarter - August 1; second quarter - November 1; third quarter - February 1; and fourth quarter - May 1. To keep postage to a minimum only two mailings are done with two quarters in each mailing.

Respectfully submitted,
Laura Blakesley
Town Collector

Town Treasurer

Reconciliation of Treasurer's Cash

Balance of Cash as of June 30, 2014	\$1,851,781.65
Cash Received	\$4,705,627.90
Cash Disbursements	\$5,049,263.74
Balance of Cash as of June 30, 2015	\$1,508,145.81

Balance consists of:

Bank of Western Mass

General Fund Checking/Payroll	\$611,333.56
General Fund-CD	\$1,942.84
Fred Cross-Library Trust Fund	\$5,000.00
Fred Cross-Cemetery Trust Fund	\$2,000.00
Consolidated Trust Fund	\$172,648.70
Septic Repair Program Account	\$51,155.61
Stabilization Fund	\$421,429.79
Cemetery Trust Funds	\$1,250.00
Mabelle Jordan Trust Fund	\$42.81

Bank of Western Mass

Fred Cross Trust Fund	\$48,029.35
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M.M.D.T

General Fund	\$76,948.11
Mary Priscilla Howes Trust Fund	\$11,845.93

Bank of America

General Fund	\$74,313.75
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Unibank

General Fund	\$10,165.22
General Fund-online banking	\$19,8653.21
General Fund-quick pay	\$386.93

Total	\$1,508,145.81
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Trustees of the Belding Memorial Library

In 2015 our Director Martha Cohen completed her second year at the library. During that time two new sections were created: a children's audio collection and a separate category for classics. Saturday story hours and workshops are now offered on a regular basis, prompting a number of people to comment on how lively and dynamic the library and has come to be. The circulation figures in all categories have increased by almost 5,000 over 2014. All of this is a very positive reflection on how Martha, Sherrie Scott, and Irene Branson have done their jobs.

But as the song says, "into each life a little rain must fall." In the case of the Belding, a lot of rain has fallen. As most of you know, 2015 was the year the ongoing problems with the building could no longer be band-aided. The decision was made by the Trustees to replace the roof, restore the interior damaged by water, install a new HVAC system, and upgrade the lighting and wiring needed to keep up with technology. An estimated \$300,000 over three years will have to be raised. The first efforts at raising funds had a positive response from individuals and households. But to accomplish those goals we will also need funding from the town while we continue to pursue other avenues such as grants and events.

Sadly in 2015 Nancy Intres resigned from the board. However, her position has been ably filled by Sandy Carter, who now not only mows our lawn, but brings fresh insights and energy to the board. After serving two full terms Virginia Wiswell has decided not to seek a third. As a trustee she has been our go-to tech person, a stalwart member of our grounds crew, and notably the host of our trivia night fundraisers. Her presence on the board will be missed.

As always, sincere thanks to the very supportive Friends of the Belding, and to the Town and its elected officials who understand how important our library is to this community and have shown it great support. Of course I want to express my great appreciation to Trustees Caroline Murray, Renee Rastorfer, Virginia Wiswell, and Sandy Carter. Each contributes something uniquely special to our effort to move the Belding forward.

Respectfully submitted,
Marcine Appel Eisenberg, Chair

Veterans Services

Fiscal year 2016 saw the creation of the UPVUSD. By member count and by square miles this is the largest veterans' district in Massachusetts. We have strived to provide expanded services through increased satellite office hours, and a mobile office for home visits. Below are just some of the programs and services we help veterans' and their dependents with:

- M.G.L. Ch. 115 benefit – Needs based program of financial and medical assistance to eligible veterans and their dependents

- Assistance to veterans and dependents to help file for health care, pensions, and service-connected disabilities

- Homeless prevention assistance to veterans and their families

- Employment help with job searches, resumes, and job interview skills

- Burial assistance to include government markers, flag holders, internment, and VA burial reimbursement

- Massachusetts annuities and tax abatement assistance

- Veterans' records retrieval and storage

- Referral to other public and private agencies to include housing, fuel assistance, employment, training, education

- Attend area outreach events (fairs, festivals, health care expos)

- District passed certification for VSOs as required by MA state law

District filed for and helped veterans and eligible dependents be awarded over \$440,000 in VA payments in the district for this year alone. Overall the district has over \$3,040,000 in VA awards flowing into our towns on a monthly basis.

Our office has conducted a thorough review of all MGL CH 115 cases in our district. The net result is a large reduction in monies being paid out by the member towns. This was accomplished by helping clients file for alternative sources of income, and revalidating clients' current situations to ensure eligibility.

For the coming year we will continue to assist veterans, attend more outreach events, and educate both the public and the member towns officials.

Timothy Niejadlik, Director
Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Bylaws of Ashfield regulate the use of land and buildings, and also the dimensional requirements such as size of lot, amount of frontage, building height, and setbacks. The underlying purpose is to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens, both current and future. Most cases come to the Zoning Board of Appeals when the applicant has been refused a building permit because either the use is prohibited or (more frequently) because the building and/or the lot itself doesn't conform to the current bylaws. In Ashfield, many smaller lots were created before current zoning was in place. Any changes to those buildings or parcels require either a Special Permit or a Variance before the building permit can be issued.

In the case of a Special Permit, the ZBA must determine the project will not overload municipal services, or have a significant impact on public health or safety; that disturbance due to sound, light, odor, or noise be minimized; that the environment is protected from erosion, pollution, undue cutting of vegetation, or disturbance to habitats; that traffic patterns are safe; and in general, that the proposed change is compatible with the neighborhood.

The process allows abutters, town residents, and surrounding towns in some cases, to comment on the application, either for or against. Research often provides interesting tidbits on history of the town, and how it developed. Only occasionally are the issues controversial; in most cases we find ways to balance common sense and adherence to the law. We encourage anyone who might be interested in serving as an alternate to speak with someone on the board.

This year was busier than usual for the Zoning Board of Appeals, with four active cases, and two preliminary inquiries. The cases that came before the ZBA involved non-conforming lots – those properties where frontage, lot size, and/or setbacks do not meet the current Zoning Bylaw because the lots were created prior to the current zoning requirements, or (in the following case) because a change in the road alignment reduced the front setback.

Case 2015-1: When Route 112 was realigned, this property on Ashfield Mountain Road lost a portion of its front yard, reducing the setback from the road right-of-way to an existing attached shed to 2', and creating a lawfully non-conforming building on this otherwise conforming lot. The owner wants to replace the shed and a small carriage house with a full two-car garage. This would extend the setback to 5', although the size of building within the setback would be increased. The

ZBA determined there would be no additional impact on municipal systems, and no negative impact on traffic, abutters, runoff, and was compatible with the neighborhood character. The Special Permit was approved with the condition that the Conservation Commission must sign off on the plans, since the property abuts Ashfield Lake. Decision was filed July 23, 2015, with construction to begin within one year.

Case 2015-2: The owner of property on Buckland Road wants to build a 16x20', two-story addition to an existing lawfully non-conforming building on a non-conforming lot (created by variance in 1970). The house sits below the road, and the addition would reduce the 18' setback to the east property line to just under 7'; an existing shed is 12' from that property line and would be removed. The owner wants to convert this to a year-round residence, and make a safer entrance than by the existing steep stone steps that descend the slope. Existing water and electric lines would be relocated during construction, and some large trees would be removed. Although the non-conforming setback would be further reduced, the neighboring house on that side is approximately 125' away, and the neighbor who attended the hearing had no objection. No other public comment was received. The ZBA inquired about other alternatives, but site factors and cost make this the only feasible option. There was some concern about the impact of removing trees on the stability of the slope, and potential impact of erosion and sedimentation on the lake. Approval and conditions from the Conservation Commission are required. The Zoning Board determined that although this plan does extend the non-conformity, it is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood, with sufficient planting to stabilize soils and screen the taller building. There is no additional impact on town water and sewer. The Special Permit was approved with the conditions that the building be no closer to the property line than 6.9', that storm water runoff be carefully managed during and after construction, and that construction begin within one year. The decision was filed September 21, 2015.

Case 2015-3: The owner of Elmer's Country Store would like to build an 8'x20' addition to the kitchen. The building and lot are lawfully non-conforming, with minimal setbacks on all sides. The addition to the east side of the building would extend to 19.5' from the property line; an existing attached garage at the southeast corner of the lot is just 2.5' from the property line. No additional plumbing or impact on water and sewer is anticipated; the owner states the larger kitchen is essential for the economic stability of the business. Impact on neighbors would be minimized by directing exterior lighting downward, and ensuring the hood fan reduces noise and odor. Parking for this business has the

biggest impact on the neighborhood, with cars parked on both sides of Norton Hill in a way that could impede emergency vehicles. The Zoning Board urged the owner to explore alternatives that would reduce the number of cars on and around the site. The ZBA approved the Special Permit with the condition that the extension be no closer than 19.5' to the east property line, that the owner take measures to proactively manage parking and traffic, and that construction begin within a year. Decision was filed September 21, 2015.

Case 2015-4: Ashfield Historical Society wants to enclose an access ramp to rear of the Plain Schoolhouse, an existing non-conforming structure on Baptist Corner Road. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires barrier-free access to any building used for public gathering, but enclosing it requires a Special Permit. The northeast corner of the building is about six feet from the property line. Anne Yuryan recused herself since she sits on the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society; alternate Michael Melcher sat in her place. There was no public objection, although the immediate abutter to the north would like the Society to add some plants to screen the addition. The Zoning Board agreed with the applicant that enclosure of the ramp is essential for safety in winter, and that the addition would not be visible from the street. There will be no impact on town water or sewer, and the public will be well served by having this barrier-free entrance. The use is certainly compatible with the neighborhood, which lies within the Ashfield Plain Historic District. One mature tree may be affected, but they are making an effort to save it. Runoff from the additional roof will be directed onto AHS land; otherwise no environmental impact is anticipated. Decision was filed November 2, 2015.

Mollie Babize, Chair

Kit Nysten, Clerk

Anne Yuryan

Michael Melcher, Alternate

